View from the
Blackdown Hills

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Parishes to share £68,000

COMMUNITIES in the Blackdown Hills will be among parishes gaining a share of £68,000 from East Devon District Council and Devon County Council after town and parish councils successfully bid for £68,419 from the Parishes Together Fund.

The two councils worked together to put the sum of £1.10 per elector into a 'Parishes Together Fund' grants scheme that town and parish councils could apply for.

The funding was available to town and parish councils working together and involving the community to try and solve local issues.

All applications had to be submitted jointly from two or more parishes.

The funding could be used for anything from permanent items to events, networks and one-off costs.

The funding ran from April 2012 to March 2013.

Among the successful projects are:

- £12,597 to buy boxes of equipment for a range of age groups and activities such as filming, arts and crafts, forest skills at Honiton, Awliscombe, Yarcombe, Upottery, Stockland, Broadhembury, Plymtree, Payhembury;
- £11,512 to fund a new vehicle for a Ring and Ride Scheme in Axminster, Membury, Musbury, Uplyme, Colyton and Kilmington;
- £1,206 for grit bins and improvements to a bridge at Chardstock and All Saints;
- £897 for flooding and drainage work at Dalwood and Shute;
- £814 for repairs to the surface of a lane and footpath in Payhembury and Broadhembury.

EDDC's part of the funding came from the New Homes Bonus, which is paid by the government to the council for every new home built or brought back into use. DCC's part of the funding came from its main budgets.

Councillor Ray Bloxham, EDDC member and chairman of the New Homes Bonus Panel which made the decision on the applications, said: "In this time of financial need this is an important fund that we have set up jointly with Devon County Council. The standard of the projects was very high and it is great to see our parishes working together."

■ POPULAR hedgelayer Colin Risdon took the Open Cup at the Cotley Hunt annual hedge laying competition. He is pictured receiving his trophy from Hunt Master Fred Eames - *see page 6*

Photo by Mary Perry

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Prank on main road could have caused fatality

AN AMBULANCE and a police car had to take evasive action at speed to avoid objects on the road.

Honiton police officers say that people could have died as a result of a road sign prank on a blind bend on the A30.

Someone dragged two large temporary triangular warning signs and sandbags into the middle of the A30 near Yarcombe in the early hours of Saturday March 2nd.

The signs had been by the side of the road on a blind bend in a wooded area at Hilltop.

According to police, a police unit and an ambulance on a 999 call had to take emergency action to avoid a collision.

Sergeant Richard Poole of Honiton police said the signs had been deliberately moved into the middle of the road to cause a collision.

He added: ""This idiotic and ludricous action very nearly had devastating consequences, not just where it happened but for the person we were on the way to assist.

"Whoever did this obviously has no idea of the potential consequences of their actions.

"I hope that we can identify them before it happens again and we end up with somebody seriously injured or worse."

Anyone with any information is urged to contact Devon and Cornwall Police on 101, quoting crime reference number KH/13/165.

Tour of Britain cycle race to pass through Blackdown Hills

STAGE six of this year's Tour of Britain cycle race is to start in Sidmouth and pass through the Blackdown Hills to its finish at Haytor in Dartmoor National Park.

Councillor Iain Chubb, East Devon District Council cabinet member for environment, said: "It's fantastic news that stage six of September's race will be starting in Sidmouth on the Jurassic coastline and pass through Honiton on its way to a finish on Dartmoor.

"This will give the people of East Devon and our visitors a fantastic spectacle to enjoy as world-class riders bring the colour and the excitement of international cycling to one of our coastal resorts and also to one of our market towns".

The organisers of the tour and Devon County Council announced that Devon will host the Tour of Britain on Friday, September 20th.

Devon will be making history as the first stage of the Tour of Britain to host a summit finish when the nation's premier cycle race returns to the county to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

The tour last raced through Sidmouth in 2010 and Haytor featured as a Skoda King of the Mountains climb in 2011, when Jonathan Tiernan Locke dominated the climbs and went on to win the Skoda King of the Mountains jersey.

It will be the seventh consecutive year that the tour will has visited Devon. In that time it has brought in more than £21 million to the local economy and showcased the county to a worldwide audience. Last year alone generated more than £7.3 million in Devon in a record breaking year.

The route will also see 96 of the world's top cyclists race through Honiton, Cullompton, Tiverton, Exeter, Moretonhampstead, and Bovey Tracey before the challenging climax in Dartmoor National Park.

Devon County Councillors Sara Randall Johnson and Paul Diviani are delighted that Honiton and the Blackdown Hills has been included in the race

For more information on The Tour of Britain, visit: www.southwesttourofbritain.co.uk and www.tourofbritain.co.uk and on Twitter follow @SWTourofBritain.

■ STAGE six of the Tour of Britain will run from Sidmouth through Honiton and Cullompton to Dartmoor

Bowling club reopens

HEMYOCK bowlers are looking forward to the opening of the new season on Saturday, April 13th.

The club is looking to attract new members and will be holding open days, for the young or more mature, to get a free taster of what is on offer.

There is no need to book, just turn up wearing comfortable clothes and a pair of flat shoes. The club has bowls of all sizes for use and club members will be on hand to help.

There are five dates on offer and it is absolutely free of charge.

The dates are Saturday, April 20th, Saturday, April 27th and Sunday April 28th. In May the days are Sunday 5th and Monday 6th. All sessions are from 10.30 am to 12.30pm

The Hemyock outdoor green has greatly improved over the past few years, mainly due to Martin Dear and his ground staff.

The club has been fortunate in the award of a grant of £4,000 from Sport England towards a new Dennis Razor Ultra mower. The new mower was delivered in March and the team were able to cut the grass before the weather turned very wintery again.

The game of bowls is simple to understand but needs skill to master. It is challenging but also enjoyable. The exercise involved is suitable for all age groups and physical abilities. It can be played just for fun and relaxation, or more competitively at club, county or national level.

If you would like more information please ring Sue Risdon 01823 680169.

Cricket club quiz

HEMYOCK Cricket Club's April Quiz will be held on Friday, April 26th starting at 7.30 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Test your general knowledge against quizmasters Vanessa and Tony.

Admission £30 per team (maximum six members). £100 first prize.

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Rural 'Oscar' for farming couple

TIVERTON and Honiton MP Neil Parish congratulated the owners of Pipers Farm on winning the top award at the Countryside Alliance Awards held in Parliament on the 12th March 2013.

Also known as the Rural Oscars these awards celebrate and acknowledge those rural businesses which contribute so much to food production, environmental stewardship and protecting rural heritage.

The Greig family of Pipers Farm in the Culm Valley near Cullompton won the top award and were crowned UK & Ireland Champions by the Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Afterwards they met local MP Neil Parish and were given a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

The Parliamentary reception was attended by Regional Champions from across the UK & Ireland, keen to celebrate rural business and produce. The UK & Ireland Champions were selected by a UK & Ireland judging panel at a lunch in February.

Commenting on the award Mr Parish, who is also a member of the environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, said: "I am delighted Peter and Henri Greig have won this award.

"At Pipers Farm they hand rear Devon Red Ruby cattle, Saddleback pigs, Suffolk lambs and chickens. All their meat is hand reared on their 50 acre farm and slaughtered at a local abattoir only a few miles away. Pipers Farm have been campaigning responsibility sourced, non-industrialised farming for 20 years and I am pleased that their work champi-

■ **RURAL OSCAR WINNERS: The team from Pipers Farm in the Culm Valley - Edward, Henri, Peter and William Greig with MP Neil Parish**

Add your voice on the future of the hills

ANYONE who lives in, works in, or just loves to visit the Blackdown Hills is being asked to add their voice to a new survey.

The Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team, based in Hemyock, is preparing a new management plan for 2014 – 2019 and has major new projects in the pipeline.

To make sure that these plans reflect the needs and views of everyone who cares about the area's landscape and wildlife, they have published a wide-ranging survey.

People are being asked what they love most about the Blackdown Hills, how conservation should be managed in the future, and where the AONB team should concentrate their efforts.

There is also a specific survey for farmers and land managers which consults their special expertise.

The survey is available via the Blackdown Hills AONB's website, and at Hemyock post office, Highfield Stores in Dunkeswell, Churchinford community shop, and Dalwood village shop. Alternatively, you can call the AONB team on 01823 680681 for a copy.

Churchstanton Parish Council considers development consultation

AT the meeting of Churchstanton Parish Council on March 13th members considered the continuing story of whether people wanted changes to the boundary of Churchinford Village, the site identified to the south of the village by a developer and whether there was still 'in principle' support for relocation of the primary school to a more sustainable location.

The council had already been given extra time by Taunton Deane Borough Council to put their case.

Councillor Alun Tarr had researched and presented a detailed study of the background to the 2010 Newberry Farm application process and this latest TDBC consultation, which will provide the backbone to the main arguments.

The parish council believed that this latest consultation was poorly run, didn't fully explain issues to people in language they could easily understand, had not taken specific issues relating to Churchinford into account (in an AONB), there had not been any recognition of the fact that Hemyock and Dunkeswell are larger, not too far away, and affect the designation of Churchinford as a minor rural centre. In fact the primary school takes most of its pupils from Devon.

The relocation of the school as part of this consultation was not deemed to be cost effective, nor liked by the community.

As far as the proposed site for development at Ford Farm field, the parish council members knew about the latest questionnaire issued by the developer's consultants and decided they would be writing direct to them and TDBC arguing that a return of the questionnaire did not mean support for the proposals, the deadline of the 14th March is too tight for its return and that the community were also able to just complete the 'comments' box if they felt that the questions were biased, much like the Scottish referendum some of the questions were felt to be 'leading'.

There was a strong view among members that just because this was the only development site indentified in the area there should be no presumption that it is acceptable and that consultation had to work with the local community to identify needs, not just for housing but for economic, social, landscape and design in an AONB. Affordable housing wasn't the only need for the village but an important one as families move out and bigger houses bring in a different community.

Members considered the report from Natural England in response to the consultation, which included the observation: "Churchinford is located within the Blackdown Hills AONB and we consider that development in this location is capable of having an adverse effect on the purposes of its designation. Churchinford is been identified as a Minor Rural Centre in the Core Strategy, although the precise number of new homes has not been defined. We would encourage the Council to consider the need for a site specific Landscape Character Appraisal to help determine the capacity for new development in Churchinford, which should give particular consideration to protecting the special qualities of the AONB in this area. We suggest the Blackdown Hills AONB would be well placed to provide further advice to the Council."

The parish council is embarking on a Parish Local Plan to identify those needs.

Members decided that they will not increase the precept this year in order to buy the Community Shop because of technical difficulties in getting the loan sorted out but are still committed to it.

It was reported that the youth club had a successful launch nigh March 2nd. Children, parents/carers and volunteers identified the activities they wanted to take part in, when and at what cost. It produced a valuable start to getting it going and it was decided to run it on Thursday evenings in the village hall, between 6.30-8.30pm with a yearly joining fee of £6 and a session fee of £1.

Submitted by
Ken Pearson, Clerk to CPC

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Clayhidon's biggest breakfast

CLAYHIDON volunteers organised the parish's biggest ever Big Breakfast on March 9th, raising an estimated £1,230 for Cancer Research UK.

Organiser Pam Reynolds said 145 breakfasts had been served, excluding helpers.

She added: "A hundred and sixteen were booked in but many others came so we ran out of hash-browns but just survived on all other foods, though we were on our last litre of milk.

"Three people were cooking with one putting out food, four were taking orders, one on coffee, one taking money, one on toast, and one on the raffle.

"It was quite hectic and people lingered on to talk."

Organisers were grateful to supermarkets which gave vouchers for food including Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury, Coop, milk from Dairy Crest, bread from Spar, apple juice from Bollhayes the apple juice, raffle prizes from Boots and eggs from local people.

"People have been very kind and realise the opportunity to support not just a local event but an extremely important charity. It looks as if we have made £1,230 which is wonderful. My thanks to everyone for their help and support, " added Mrs Reynolds.

■ **BIG BREAKFAST: Plenty of willing helpers in Clayhidon (above) and a hungry horde in the hall (below).**

In celebration of books

■ **DRESSED FOR SUCCESS: Dunkeswell Pre-School celebrated World Book Day fancy dress-style, with staff and children dressing up as their favourite book characters. There were witches and tigers, pirates and superheroes and the children all received a £1 book voucher. To enquire about spaces at preschool or to arrange a visit, contact Helen Brooks on 01404 891622 or email info@dunkeswellpreschool.co.uk**

Film nights on Saturday

DUE to popular demand the bi monthly Filmstock screenings at Clumstock Village Hall have been change to Saturdays. to a Saturday.

The remaining Filmstock dates for the year are: May 4th, July 6th, September 7th, and November 2nd. Screenings will include a children's film during the Saturday afternoons.

The next evening film will be: Skyfall (12A)

Licensed bar until midnight, hotdogs, sweets and popcorn. Doors open 6:45, film starts 7:30. Tickets £5 on the door or in advance from The Strand Stores or the Culm Valley Inn

The first children's matinee screening will be Who Framed Roger Rabbit (PG).

NEWS *briefs*

Stone sifting stopped for planning permission

THE RUNWAY at Smeatharpe airfield has been let to a private contractor.

Kielly Brothers, from Birmingham have been using the area for storing and sieving aggregate for road surfacing projects in the Devon area.

The company previously used Culmhead airfield in Somerset for their business.

East Devon District Council has ordered that activities be ceased pending a planning application as the runway is classed as agricultural land and there had been no application for a change of use.

Graham Long from Action on Noise and Nuisance in the Blackdowns reported that villagers in Smeatharpe had been disturbed by the number of lorries travelling through the village with loads of stone.

Celebration lunch

DALWOOD Recreation Trust has finally completed many months of negotiations to purchase the recreation field and the Woodhaven Building in the village from Devon County Council.

In celebration the trust is holding a bring and share lunch at the Jubilee Field and Pavilion on Saturday, April 14th from 2 to 4pm.

The intention is to try to take a village photograph which had to be cancelled last June due to poor weather.

Bouncing at Bookworms

THERE will be an extra treat for the tiny tots Bookworms group when they meet at the Blackdowns Healthy Living Centre on April 11th.

A bouncy castle and a small ball pool has been arranged to complement the usual activities.

The group meets from 1.30 to 3pm and the session is timed to coincide with the visit of the mobile library which will be parking outside the centre at 3.05pm.

View from the Blackdown Hills welcomes contributions of news and photos from any individual, community, school or organisation in the Blackdown Hills.
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Two championships in a week for hedge layer

POPULAR hedgelayer Colin Risdon took the Open Cup at the Cotley Hunt annual hedge laying competition on Roger Parris's farm above Stockland on the Blackdown Hills.

This was his second open successes in a week as he had finished top in the Blackdown Hills Hedgelaying Competition at Membury the previous weekend.

The Cotley Hunt hedge laying competition, which involves a meet of hounds, is regarded by some as one of the best competitions on the circuit.

A specific Devon style of hedge laying was used which is designed for the banks seen all across the county. The two combs on either side are pinned down with 'crooks' cut from the hedge. Judges give the hedge layers marks on many aspects including the quality of cutting, best use of crooks and neatness of finished hedge and its effectiveness as a stock barrier.

Roger Parris (National Champion 2000 and 2007) is passionate about hedge laying, and has been in the business for many years. He claims that the key to his success is laying "it thick enough for a butterfly to fly in, but not through". He said: "From time to time the branches can get a bit lively and different types of wood are more challenging than others. Just like ladies, they all have different temperaments!"

There were over 40 entrants of all ages, including an 'over 60s section, and a novice pairs class, where fathers and sons competed together.

Many of the competitors had been national champions and are passionate about this sport. Stewart Drew, who won last year, said it was "a way of life" and John Stockwell particularly enjoyed seeing the before and after affect, stating "the skill is incredible, it's baffling".

The Cotley Hedgelaying competition was started five years ago by Mr Parris and Hunt Master Mary Perry and since then it has attracted over 170 entrants, given away almost £1,000 in prize money, which is raised through sponsorship from local firms such as Pearce Seeds, who have generously sponsored the event every year and raised over £5,000 for local charities. This year money raised at the event will be presented to the Devon Air Ambulance and the Prince's Countryside Fund.

Results:

Open - 1 Colin Risdon, Bristol; 2 Paul Gulliford, Bristol; 3 Terry Coombes, Yarcombe; 4 Colin Clutterbuck, Bristol

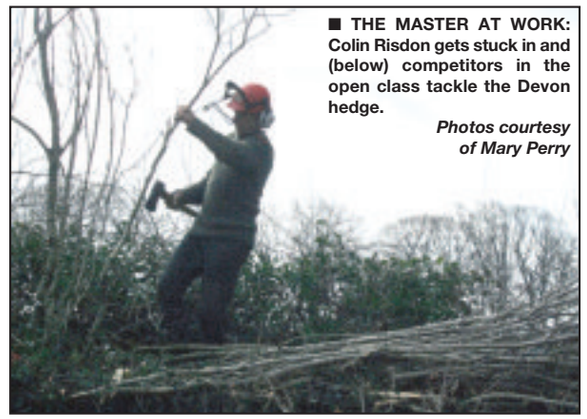
Ladies - 1 Lydia Harris, Weymouth; 2 Jenny Newman, Weymouth; 3 Tina Bath, Bristol

Intermediate - 1 Malcolm Dowling, Bristol; 2 Martin Vickery, Thorncombe; 3 Mark Ireland, Bristol

Novice Pairs - 1 Tom Aplin and Emily Wells; 2 Sam Parris and Linda McKeegan; 3 Sam and Christopher Grabham

Over 60s Prize - George Pidgeon

HUNTERS MEET HEDGE LAYERS: Hunt Master, Fred Eames with the Cotley Hounds chats to hedge layers beside the finished hedge at end of competition.



■ THE MASTER AT WORK: Colin Risdon gets stuck in and (below) competitors in the open class tackle the Devon hedge.

Photos courtesy of Mary Perry

The Queens Arms at Pitminster

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DISCONTINUED MODELS AND FABRICS REDUCED TO CLEAR:
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Norvik Sofa Chair & Recliner Was £2150 now £999
Bronte Sofa Chair & Recliner was £1988 now £999
York Fireside with Leg Rest Was £464 now £275
Norvik Dual Motor Care recliner was £1000 now £600*
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The Keswick Range
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WI news

AN ELECTRICITY cut and the cancellation of the speaker at short notice caused quite a stir for Sampford Arundel W.I. at their March meeting – it was freezing cold, the electricity went, and the booked speaker cancelled.

James Bradnock kindly agreed to step in and talk at the last minute. He spoke, and showed slides (when the electricity was fixed) on Sir John Popham, one of the most important and powerful men in England during the reigns of Elizabeth 1st and James 1st, whose marital home is now the Catholic Church in Mantle Street.

Both revered and hated, ('er be as bad as Popham' is a recorded saying). He oversaw and judged the trial and torture of Guy Fawkes.

His final house –Popham House, now the rugby pitch - was bombarded and destroyed from Foxdown Hill after his death. He died from falling off his horse on the Blackdowns, and sank into a bog, never to be found – his family tomb in St John's Church contains no bodies.

However, it is said that Sir John appears on New Year's Eve at midnight to take a 'cock's step' toward Wellington each year.

A riveting subject, and excellent presentation.

● GUEST speaker at Smeatharpe WI March meeting was Haydn Welch.

He is an extreme swimmer having swum the English Channel on his back, setting a world record time of 17 hours two minutes in 1993. He is the first man to have achieved this feat. Mr Welch represented England in freediving but specialises in long distance swimming. He also swam the 'Coldest Ice Mile' by a British swimmer, the first ever in Lake Bled, Slovenia. It made members shiver to see the icy photos of his exploits and was a thought provoking talk. He was warmly thanked by Gill Dennis.

The competition for a homemade iced bun or biscuit was won by Sue Ferguson with Geraldine Field runner up.

Teresa Summerhayes won Flower of the Month with a dwarf narcissi.

Next meeting is the A.G.M. on Thursday April 4th with a quiz at 7.30pm in Smeatharpe Hall.

■ LEARNING TO WEAVE: Rachel Lancaster, Tracy Hill, Louise Cottey and Olivia Evans

Learning a traditional craft

THE spinning and weaving workshop situated in Staplehay, Taunton, has recently been the base for two Somerset College textile degree students, Rachel Lancaster and Olivia Evans.

The girls are taking part in the 'Hand on Crafts' initiative managed by Taunton based Superact CIC

With the expert tuition of local weaver, Louise Cottey, the girls gained a greater insight into the structure of fabric and texture. Using a mixture of wool and alpaca yarn they were shown how to make a warp, dress the loom and to start weaving.

They very quickly mastered the basic skills required and using a range of different methods and yarns, they were able to create their own unique designs.

Olivia, said: "I have really enjoyed weaving and have been amazed at the designs that can be produced."

Rachel, said" " I would love to continue weaving and experiment with different yarns and textures."

Hand on Crafts is a Voluntary Arts initiative funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

The project has been offering young people between 18 and 25 the chance to sample traditional craft based skills. Superact has been delivering Hand on Crafts in Somerset and Plymouth, so far students have tried their hand at weaving, natural dyeing, basket making and felt making, working in partnership with local makers to offer up these sessions.

Tracy Hill, co-ordinator, said: "I was thrilled to discover this local group of spinners and weavers, who are keen to encourage new students to join them and learn the art of spinning and weaving. The students have been lucky to have access to such a unique workshop and I hope that more students will be able to take advantage of the scheme in the future."

For more information about courses held at the workshop contact Sarah Downer 01823 601245 or for information about Hand on Crafts, contact Tracy Hill 01823 666641.

Gardening news

THE Blackdown Hills Garden Club are delighted to have welcomed eight new members already this year.

The speaker for the March meeting was Michael Pollock on the theme of the vegetable garden.

Mr Pollock, now retired, was head of education for Royal Horticultural Society at RHS Wisley and is author of many publications including the RHS book "Vegetable and Fruit Gardening".

Having spent over 50 years in horticulture he gave a very interesting and informative talk on all aspects of growing vegetables from soil preparation to the correct situation, digging, soil fertility, composting, container gardening, pests and diseases, raised beds and cloches and varieties of different vegetables.

He spoke of the RHS Award of Garden Merit which growers strive hard to achieve.. His photographs showed just how beautiful the forms and colours of all plants are.

Many members signed up for forthcoming outings. The programme can be found at www.upottery.com.

Visitors are very welcome to any event at a cost of £3.00 (trips extra).

The next meeting will take place at Churchinford Hall on Wednesday, April 17th at 7.30pm when John Horsey from East Lambrook will speak about the Magic of the Winter Garden.

On Wednesday May 15th the club will be visiting Jacksons Nursery at Combe Raleigh, near Honiton 6.30pm for a tour and demonstration. Members can take their own pot or hanging basket to plant up with the nursery supplying all materials. Transport is available.

● CORFE and Pitminster Gardening Society held their annual Spring Flower Show on March 23rd.

Despite the poor weather of the past few months there was a good showing of daffodils and spring shrubs in the village hall, judged by Vic Verrier, although entries were down on previous years.

There were pretty entries in the dinner table floral arrangement class and the two categories in the photographic competition entitled "Fruit/s" and "Vegetable/s" produced some wonderful prints which caused a lot of laughter. The simnel cake class produced very good and satisfying entries.

Visitors enjoyed the exhibits and a good tea.

The Society meets in Corfe Village Hall at 7 pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except for January) and there are seasonal talks to cover all aspects of gardening , as well as outings during the year to well-known and interesting gardens in the south-west. New members and visitors are always welcome please contact the secretary (01823 421678) for details of meetings.

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The shop has a light and airy feel with natural light, where brides can see the gowns they are trying, through to the large mirrored changing rooms, where the lighting has a totally different feel. Brides have been amazed at the difference in the lighting when shown this aspect. The comfortable seating area is a must for the bride's chosen family and friends.

Working with well known designer gowns Jean is the exclusive stockist in Somerset for the Kathy Ireland range of wedding gowns. To accessorise when the bride has the gowns on helps to show the final look. Prima Moda Brides stock the veils, tiara and shoes from Richard Designs and Rainbow Club.

The windows are changed each week again to present the different designs and also colours of gowns, with many compliments on how stunningly the windows are displayed and many brides making appointments just on passing the shop.

Once again Prima Moda Brides is well worth a visit and although appointments are not always necessary it is helpful to get the personal service.

Jean welcomes you to experience a truly personal and professional service, please find us on our web site at www.primamodabrides.com or tel. 01460 54600 opening times 10-00 a.m. - 4-00 p.m.

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LORRAINE started her business 'Lorraine Daykin Flowers by Design' in 2008.

From an early age she had always loved flowers, and after a long career in nursing decided one day that it was time to develop her passion. She completed three years training in Floristry and Floral Design and is constantly developing new skills and techniques. Lorraine works from her studio just outside the village of Hemyock and offers a bespoke floral design service, creating stunning flowers individually tailored for your wedding, special/corporate event or party.

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In praise of Thelma

VOLUNTEERS at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery in Honiton are celebrating the birth of the artist which bears their name with a special centenary exhibition.

As a special tribute to Thelma Hulbert, who lived at the gallery known as Elmfield House from 1984, to 1995; a collection of her still life canvases are being featured in a unique exhibition.

Exploring how different women artists see familiar everyday objects, the gallery's 'Painting the Everyday' centenary event offers the chance to see a wide selection of Thelma's work which has come from relatives, Camden School for Girls where she once taught, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and a private collector.

Thelma Hulbert's name become synonymous with still life subjects during her long working period from 1934 to 1994. She said of herself that she became fascinated with the objects that surrounded her in her everyday life.

A series of still life paintings from south west contemporary artists, Jessica Cooper and Vanessa Bowman will also be shown during the exhibition, giving visitors the opportunity to compare modern work to that of Thelma's during her time as a painter.

Both Jessica and Vanessa's highly collectable paintings will also be for sale throughout the exhibition.

Curator, Angela Blackwell was delighted to be hosting the centenary celebrations and said: "It is a great thing to be able to bring Thelma's work back to her former home and to share the celebrations of her life and art with the community of Honiton.

CENTENARY TRIBUTE: Gallery staff member Deborah Smith, gallery volunteer Sally Boom and curator Angela Blackwell raise a glass to Thelma Hulbert

"The gallery was her studio, so it is wonderful to have her paintings once again hanging here.

"For me, the greatest thing is to be able to have her work exhibited alongside two current south west artists and to compare them all.

"All three collections are inspired by the everyday and really make you stop and think, so it gives visitors the chance to be reflective whilst also remembering the great life of Thelma Hulbert."

The 'Painting the Everyday 100th anniversary exhibition will run until April 27th. The gallery is open 10am until 5pm, Tuesday to Saturday and admission is free, but donations are welcome to support the Thelma Hulbert Gallery learning and exhibition programme. For more information, call 01404 45006.

Another big success for Blackdowns Early Music

GOOD church buildings deserve good music; good music deserves good performances; good performances get good audiences (in spite of the freezing wind).

All four of these came together for hundreds of people in the Wellington area with a rich variety of music to suit all tastes.

Maybe because Easter happens to be so early this year, there was a lot more going on than usual.

On the Friday, there was piano recital in Milverton and on Saturday there was a good audience for Wellington Choral Society's performance of Elijah.

However my favourite was the Palm Sunday performance of early music for Easter by Blackdowns Early Music Projects.

Their theme, wholly suitable for the week preceding Easter was "Crucifixus".

Once again they gathered singers from many parts of Europe for the weekend to prepare works by Lassus, Palestrina, Gabrieli, & Lotti for the first half of the concert.

We very much enjoyed two familiar versions of Lotti's fabulous Crucifixus, surprisingly rich continuo was given by just a chamber organ as well as a dazzling bass violinist playing "pizzicato" in the 10-part version.

All the music was carefully chosen from the late renaissance and early baroque period, culminating in the second half with an exuberant performance of the Requiem by Venetian musician Francesco Cavalli.

Special mention must be made of the way that the solo sections combined to make a really impressive contrast to the strength of the powerful double choir settings.

Particularly pleasing was the way that the choir responded to dynamic subtlety given by the director JanJoost van Elburg.

Obviously as with all live performances there were moments of tension due to the undoubted complexities of the music, but these were overcome very capably.

The appreciative audience left with a greatly enhanced experience of early music.

The parish church in Wellington is exceptionally good as a performance venue for these sorts of events having comfortable flexible seating and all the facilities you need for an enjoyable evening out.

How lucky we are to have such excellent places to attract great performances into the area. - *Contributed*

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Hemyock apprentice and his team compete to be the best

A YOUNG carpenter/joiner apprentice from Redrow Homes has taken on a challenge to help a community and raise the profile of apprenticeships.

Charlie Baker, from Hemyock, is competing in the Brathay Challenge 2013 along with eight fellow apprentices as part of the Redrow South West Team. The event is the official search for 'apprentice team of the year' and is organised by the Brathay Trust and supported by the National Apprenticeship Service.

Charlie, 19, is based at Redrow's site at Bagley Green, Wellington, and is a carpenter/joiner trade apprentice while also studying for an NVQ level three in carpentry and joinery at Somerset College in Taunton.

Charlie said: "I have been working for Redrow for 18 months now and I am really enjoying my apprenticeship. I am now studying for my NVQ Level 3 at Somerset College, Taunton for one day a week and spend the other four days as apprentice carpenter/joiner for Redrow at Bagley Green, Wellington.

"I think apprenticeships are a really great way to gain experience in a trade like carpentry and joinery while gaining a qualification at the same time. I am very lucky to have secured this apprenticeship which is really hands on".

For part one of the challenge Charlie went to Redrow's headquarters in Bristol, to job swap with the company's commercial director Keith Miller. During the day Charlie sat in on top level meetings in Keith's place; including the weekly director's meeting, took part in site inspections and even had Keith's office for the day. Then, the following day, it was Keith's turn to see what it is like to be an apprentice on site.

Charlie gave Keith a varied day, with plenty of hands-on carpentry and joinery experience in a four-bedroom property. Charlie showed Keith the correct way to use a whole host of power tools and they worked with skirting boards, architraves and floor joists.

Mr Miller said: "Charlie put me through my paces, he was a great mentor and he has proved himself a real credit to Redrow. At Redrow we are huge advocates of apprenticeships and believe that they are one of the best ways to future proof our business and ensure our employees have the skills set to succeed.

Last week a group of nine young Redrow apprentices took on a challenge to help the community and raise the profile of apprenticeships. The Brathay Apprentice Challenge is the official search for the apprentice team of the year, supported by the National Apprenticeship Service.

For part two of the challenge Charlie's team of apprentices including six apprentice carpenters, one brick layer, one electrician and an office apprentice had to take on a community project.The team decided to help St Nicholas School, a specialist school for children and young people, aged four to nineteen, who have severe, complex or profound and multiple learning disabilities which currently has 72 students.

The apprentices planned to re-vamp one of the old sheds at the school into a summer house. They worked on the project over two days last week and the shed was completely transformed thanks to kind donations from local suppliers, including: South West Decorating, Show Business Interiors, England Carpentry, Wickes, B&Q, A La Carte Flooring, Handley's Fencing Contractors, John Lewis and Travis Perkins.

Charlie said: "This was a fantastic project and all went according to plan. Towards the end of the project we met the head boy and girl who were really excited about what we had done and they enjoyed doing a spot of painting inside the new summer house too. This is such a worthy cause and we are all delighted to have been able to help as part of our challenge."

The two tasks in the challenge's regional heats will each account for up to 50 per cent of the team's final score, which will be assessed by a portfolio submitted to the judges. The top two teams from each region (North, Central, London and South East, South West) will then battle it out to be crowned the apprentice team of the year.

The finalists will be announced at an event in London in April. The competition culminates in an adventure challenge at the Brathay Trust's Windermere headquarters from 10th-12th June.

■ HEMYOCK apprentice Charlie Baker

■ TEAM WORK: Charlie and his team of apprentices prepare to begin work to transform a shed into a summerhouse for a specialist school

■ ROOM AT THE TOP: Charlie swaps jobs with Redrow commercial director Keith Miller

Working our Woodlands

with John Greenshields

I AM always pleasantly surprised at the enthusiasm of woodland owners when I am visiting their woods, and advising them, and although some ideas are somewhat impractical most are very useful.

There is always a slight danger in "tidying up" woodland too much, and removing valuable habitat for some wildlife, such as rotten wood and undergrowth.

This also makes the wood what I call "cold floored" ie allowing the wind through with out any thing to stop it, and this leaves nowhere for critters to get out of the wind so they will move on to another warmer woodland.

Although all wood is good for fuel, some are better than others because of their calorific value (the amount of heat that can be given out). Also we need to think about how long we will have to wait for the tree to be useful as fuel, with some fast growing species being of more use.

Forest Research claim that 2.4 tonne per ha is a sustainable extraction figure, however I would be extremely cautious about using numbers as all woodland is different. My experience says that from an average semi ancient woodland 1.7 tonne per ha is a closer figure.

The cost of extraction is also a factor that cannot be over looked, as quite often it can cost more than it's worth to get out of the woodland. A lot of thought should go into the timing of any extraction as this could impact on all sorts of wildlife as well as flora and fauna and regeneration of trees.

We tend to restrict operations from September to the end of February, after all that does give you five months, and it allows the woodland to settle back into its natural rhythm .

We had a very successful horse logging day here in March, with three horses - Sol, Kipp and Annabel - and some 20 students.

The horses are owned by Kate Mobbs-Morgan and Richard Branscome and everybody had a chance to "have a go".

The next course is in the events section on the Woodbiz web site.

In several woods across the Blackdowns there was lot of wind blow damage last winter and we are starting to clear them up. The worst part is that because they were blown down as apposed to being cut down, they are nearly all useless for timber.

When a tree is blown down it usually cracks or brakes which leaves most of the timber as fire wood.

However we did manage (with considerable skill) save a huge oak for quality timber (about 6 cm) by using two winches to roll it over before cutting.

My usual contacts are
01823660764
parkfarm@tinyonline.co.uk

■ NEWLY split chestnut stakes

Volunteering opportunities in the hills

GET outside, get fit, make friends and help improve and conserve the beautiful habitats of the Blackdown Hills AONB.

Regular volunteering opportunities are offered by the Neroche Conservation Volunteers on the northern part of the Blackdown Hills; The Wildside Experience near Hemyock and with the National Trust Coombe Wood Conservation Volunteers, near Honiton (this project only takes place between October and March).

If you haven't already done so, you could go to the volunteering events section of the website - www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/Events-Calendar.html where you may find something of interest .

Soon there will be other volunteering opportunities you can get involved with that only take place during spring, summer and autumn including:

- The Blackdown Hills Big Bat Survey
- Butterfly and moth survey work with Butterfly Conservation
- Various task groups working along the Rivers Axe and the Otter to pull up and control the very invasive plant Himalayan Balsam.

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Mrs P, By Email

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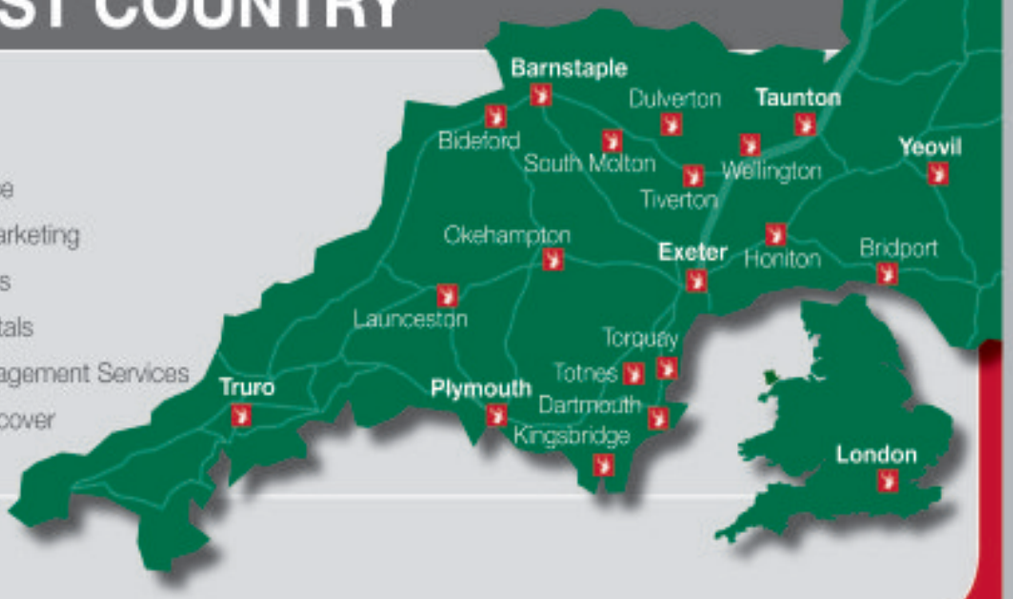

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